

**Hawaii  
Legislative  
Council  
Members**

Joell Edwards  
Wainiha Country  
Market  
Hanalei

Russell Ruderman  
Island Naturals  
Hilo/Kona

Dr. Andrew Johnson  
Niko Niko Family  
Dentistry  
Honolulu

Robert H. Pahia  
Hawaii Taro Farm  
Wailuku

Maile Meyer  
Na Mea Hawaii  
Honolulu

Tina Wildberger  
Kihei Ice  
Kihei

L. Malu Shizue Miki  
Abundant Life  
Natural Foods  
Hilo

Kim Coco Iwamoto  
Enlightened Energy  
Honolulu

Chamber of  
Sustainable  
Commerce  
P.O. Box 22394  
Honolulu, HI  
96823

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair  
Committee on Judiciary

Tuesday, February 6, 2024  
10:00 AM  
Conference Room 016 or via Zoom

RE: SB2381 Cleaner Elections - Support with Amendments



Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Committee Members,

The Chamber of Sustainable Commerce represents over 100 small businesses across the State of Hawaii that strive for a triple bottom line: people, planet and prosperity – we know we can strengthen our economy without hurting workers, consumers, communities or the environment. This is why we support SB2381 with amendments.

SB2381 brings us one step closer towards a representational democracy that protects small business owners, consumers and the environment – not just large corporations who can afford to pay-to-play through lobbyists and multi-tiered campaign contributions.

Luxury developers, defense contractors, big pharma, agri-chemical corporations, and all the private attorneys and consultants they hire, can afford to give candidate the maximum allowable contributions; they can also hire lobbyists who can give maximum contributions to these same candidates, and well-funded candidates can buy max contribution tickets to fundraisers for other candidates in their faction – all of these max contributions quickly add up to a campaign war chest that is almost impossible to challenge in any impactful way.

Furthermore, the campaigns of certain legislative leaders may have already benefited from state taxpayer money being laundered through state Grant-In-Aid (GIA) recipients – that were hand-picked by those legislative leaders. After select GIA money goes through the wash and spin cycle, a portion may end up in those same legislators' campaign accounts. For example, look at how much taxpayer money went to GIA recipients Navatek and Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Council and compare that to the amounts of campaign contributions from employees, consultants, lobbyists and family members of those GIA recipients. Meanwhile, the legislature has exempted these millions of dollars in GIA awards from the State Ethics Commission's oversight.

While SB2381 begins to level the playing field for candidates who are not receiving GIA-campaign "kickbacks", more must be done to realize the corrective impact this bill seeks. We urge this committee to add sections to this bill that will: 1) cap the maximum allowable contribution to a candidate campaign at \$100 per donor per election - including from candidates themselves and their immediate families, 2) prohibit candidate campaigns from making contributions to other candidate campaigns, and 3) ensure the Hawaii Ethics Commission has oversight over GIA contracts in the same way they do over all other state contracts and expenditures of state funds.